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January 11, 1961

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LETTER No. _____
DATE _____

Addressee's
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Department of International Studies

Dr. Daniel Ellsberg
The Rand Corporation
1700 Main Street
Santa Monica, California

Dear Dr. Ellsberg:

I was particularly pleased to meet you at the American Economic Association meeting because I have long been impressed with your work. I enclose a paper I gave at the Southern Economic Association meeting and a reprint of an article which footnotes "The Reluctant Duelist." These will give you sort of an introduction to the work that Buchanan and I are now engaged in.

The principal reason for this letter, however, is to enlist your assistance in a problem that has been bothering me recently. I need a distinguished game theorist who lives within reach of Las Vegas and you meet the specifications. It is generally believed that game theory was invented by Von Neuman. I think that I have found an earlier invention, but I am not sure. The game variously known as Blackjack, Twenty-one and, in England, Pontoon has been played by professional gamblers for a long period of time. It is clearly a game of strategy, although chance also enters in, and my question is how did they determine the proper rules for the dealer to follow in a professional gambling establishment? The gambling mills in Las Vegas have specific rules in instructing their dealers how to play. It seems possible either that these rules are not, in fact, optimal, in which case game theory would be of some benefit to them, or that someone sometime in the past solved a specific game theory matrix.

Doubtless, this problem is of no overwhelming importance, but it is of some interest for the history of game theory. If you have an opportunity to investigate the matter, I would very much appreciate hearing the results.

Sincerely,

Gordon Tullock

Gordon Tullock
Gordon Tullock
Sent both
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GT:nw

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